

## Grant Outcome Report

### NYSHealth Emergency Funding Project: Supporting New York State-based Haitian Earthquake Relief Efforts

#### The Problem

On January 12, 2010, a catastrophic earthquake hit the Port-au-Prince area, the capital of Haiti. This 7.0 magnitude earthquake devastated the area and the country, affecting up to 3 million people. Approximately 316,000 individuals were killed as a result of the earthquake, and millions more were displaced from their homes without food and clothing.

Extending beyond Haiti, the impact of the earthquake affected Haitian communities in New York: more than 400,000 Haitians reside in the State, with the largest Haitian communities in New York City, Long Island, and Rockland County. Community-based organizations serving Haitian communities faced numerous challenges. In response to the hundreds of thousands of deaths associated with the earthquake, many Haitians in New York sought to help relatives in Haiti cope with physical and mental health problems. They also faced an influx of survivors coming to New York to be with their families. In addition, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security announced an 18-month temporary protected status for all Haitian immigrants residing in the United States prior to the earthquake. This order allowed them to temporarily live and work in the United States rather than having to return to Haiti in the wake of the earthquake. Many small community-based organizations, which were already stretched beyond their resources, had to find additional ways to care for and provide mental health counseling and case management services to their Haitian constituents, even as staff members dealt with the loss of their own family and friends in Haiti.

In response to this catastrophe and the needs of New York Haitian communities, the New York State Health Foundation (NYSHealth) immediately reached out to its Community Advisory Committee, immigration service organizations, Philanthropy New York, and other foundation peers. While there was a substantial

#### KEY INFORMATION:

**GRANTEE**

Brooklyn Community Foundation

**GRANT TITLE**

New York City Haitian Hope and Healing Fund

**DATES**

May 2010 – March 2012

**AMOUNT**

\$100,00

**GRANTEE**

Long Island Community Foundation

**GRANT TITLE**

Long Island Haitian Support Fund

**DATES**

May 2010 – December 2011

**AMOUNT**

\$25,00

**GRANTEE**

Haitian American Cultural and Social Organization

**GRANT TITLE**

Haitian Support Project

**DATES**

July 2010 – October 2011

**AMOUNT**

\$25,00

**FUNDING**

Other

outpouring of donations to Haiti through international relief organizations, such as American Red Cross, NYSHealth wanted to help in a way that aligned with its mission of improving the health of New Yorkers.

As a result, NYSHealth staff members developed a three-part response strategy. The Foundation participated in two separate funding collaboratives led by Brooklyn Community Foundation and Long Island Community Foundation. NYSHealth also provided a grant to Haitian American Cultural and Social Organization to provide support for mental health care referral and case management services. Totalling \$150,000, NYSHealth's three grants supported service organizations in three areas of the State, with a focus on ensuring and expanding the availability of resources for mental health counseling and case management services in Haitian communities.

## Grant Activities and Outcomes

### *Brooklyn Community Foundation*

With more than 130,000 Haitian residents in Brooklyn and Queens, Brooklyn Community Foundation (BCF) and United Way of New York City established the New York City Haitian Community Hope and Healing Fund (Hope and Healing Fund) to address the short- and long-term needs of the Haitian community. The Hope and Healing Fund provided grants in four focus areas:

- Case management grants focused on connecting individuals and families to community resources regarding immigration; family reunification and adoption; housing; financial assistance; public benefits; grief and trauma counseling; and job training services and resources.
- Legal services grants were used to assist nonprofits and Haitian non-citizens in applying for temporary protected status and other permissions to stay in the United States.
- Healing grants were used for counseling and other mental health resources to promote recovery and community-based events to encourage community formation, strengthening, and identity.
- Education grants supported English-language instruction, workforce training, and other education programs to facilitate a smooth transition to American culture and life.

NYSHealth awarded a \$100,000 grant to BCF, as part of the Hope and Healing Fund, with the specific purpose of improving mental health services and counseling.<sup>1</sup> Initially, half of the funds were used to support State University of New York (SUNY) Downstate Medical Center to provide trauma relief, mental and physical health services, and outreach to the Haitian community at local food markets and churches.

Two SUNY Downstate staff members—Dr. Jean Tropnas, a psychiatrist, and Jean Markes Nosea, a certified

<sup>1</sup> In addition to BCF, United Way of New York City, and NYSHealth, other funders and Hope and Healing Fund partners included Altman Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, UJA-Federation of New York, Capital One, IBM, Seth Sprague Educational and Charitable Foundation, and Target.

social worker—worked with local churches to hold supportive therapy sessions after church services on the weekends. During these sessions, Dr. Tropnas and Mr. Nosea discussed pertinent issues, such as adjustment to the loss of family and friends, survivor's guilt, separation from family, domestic violence, and stress from caring for additional family members. During a two- to three-month period, 40 people were served at group sessions, and radio outlets were used for further outreach.

Dr. Tropnas also provided 40 individuals with mental health care, including crisis intervention, short-term supportive psychotherapy, and ongoing long-term therapy without medication. Unfortunately, new patients faced at least a six-week wait to get new appointments at SUNY Downstate for mental health services. As a result, Dr. Tropnas helped one of the Hope and Healing Fund grantees, Diaspora Community Services, establish a referral partnership with Kings County Hospital Center to provide mental health services for the Haitian community.

The remaining \$50,000 of NYSHealth funds were used to help support three recipients of the Hope and Healing Fund: Diaspora Community Services, CAMBA, and Haitian Family Resource Center. Diaspora Community Services and CAMBA received funding for their case management services, which included fostering access to health services and referring patients to mental health counseling and domestic violence intervention. The Haitian Family Resource Center, a community-based organization that was created immediately after the earthquake, used the funds to conduct needs assessments and provide general mental health case management services.

Within 100 days of the earthquake, the Hope and Healing Fund raised and disbursed a total of \$250,000 in funding for 6-month projects to 14 nonprofit organizations serving Haitian communities.<sup>2</sup> In its first year, the Hope and Healing Fund raised more than \$500,000, allowing many of the initial projects to be renewed.

### *Long Island Community Foundation*

Long Island has a significant Haitian population: nearly 30,000 Haitians reside in parts of Nassau and Suffolk counties. Immediately after the earthquake, Long Island Community Foundation (LICF) experienced an influx of inquiries from local organizations that had seen a drastic increase in the need for mental health services, social services, and legal services among the Long Island Haitian community. In response, LICF partnered with Long Island Unitarian Universalist Fund and NYSHealth to create the Long Island Haitian Support Fund (the Fund). NYSHealth granted \$25,000 to the Fund specifically to support and expand mental health services in the region.

<sup>2</sup>These 14 organizations are Diaspora Community Services, CAMBA, Haitian First Church of the Brethren, Haitian-Americans United for Progress, Brooklyn Defender Services, Lutheran Social Services of New York, CUNY Citizenship NOW!, Haiti Cultural Exchange, KONGO, SUNY Downstate Medical Center, Counseling In Schools National Network, Flanbwayan Haitian Literacy Project, Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees, and Brooklyn Workforce Innovations. Learn more at: <http://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/sites/default/files/HHF%202010%20report%20rev%20final%20email-web.pdf>.

In April 2010, the Fund issued a competitive request for proposals to support organizations that provide mental health and health access services; legal services; and support and case management services. Three organizations were selected to receive support from the Fund because of their established track record for working with people of Haitian descent: Catholic Charities, Haitian American Family of Long Island, and North Shore Child and Family Guidance Center (the Center).

Through the Fund, the Center received \$25,000 in NYSHealth funding to support its organization and the mental health needs of Haitian students and families in the Westbury region of Nassau County.



The Center hired two outreach staff members to meet with school officials in the Westbury school district and understand how Haitian students were doing after the earthquake. Rather than focus only on providing mental health services or counseling over the course of the grant period, the outreach staff members worked with new immigrant students and their families to ensure a smooth transition into the Westbury school system. The Center found that the biggest challenges facing both new immigrants and students whose parents did not speak English were the language barrier and the lack of English as a second language (ESL) classes. The Center determined that helping children communicate and regain a sense of security and safety were important to ensuring the health and wellbeing of students. Thus, the project focused on helping students and their families adjust to the American school system and getting them access to ESL classes.

It was also important that children and their families came together in support groups to speak with people from the same culture and language and describe their perceptions of the earthquake. Therefore, the ESL classes, weekly support groups, and various community events that the Center hosted served as a way to build supportive networks among the Haitian community. The Center also established strong partnerships with two churches, seven community-based organizations, and the Westbury school district to refer the students and families for housing, food, and immigration assistance. By the end of the grant period, the Center helped approximately 175 children and their families through various efforts, which exceeded its target of reaching 150. The Center also secured additional grant funding to support its outreach efforts, including \$7,500 from Slomo and Cindy Silvan Foundation, \$10,000 from Greentree Foundation, and \$1,500 from Junior League of Long Island.

### *Haitian American Cultural and Social Organization*

With approximately 10,000 Haitian residents in its Spring Valley area, Rockland County has the third-largest

Haitian community in New York. In the aftermath of the earthquake, Haitian American Cultural and Social Organization (HACSO) became the leading agency in the area to assist immigrants from Haiti and local Haitian residents with social and health care services. It had been relying on two interns to handle all case management-related tasks—including assistance with immigration, food, housing, education, medical care, and public health insurance—for approximately 60 Haitian families (representing 190 individuals). In addition, an influx of approximately 130 children from Haiti entered the Spring Valley school district, and that number was expected to rise along with additional adults.<sup>3</sup>

With NYSHealth support, HACSO hired a part-time case manager to increase access to health and mental health services. During the grant period, HACSO achieved the following outcomes:

- Increased access to health and mental health services for at least 200 residents in the Haitian community. During the grant period, HACSO assisted approximately 492 families (representing 1,719 individuals) through direct services for and referrals to preventive health or general medical exams. Of the families, 304 were new residents from Haiti, which far exceeded HACSO'S original target of assisting 200 new families.
- Collaborated with other community organizations and hosted 13 community events and health fairs, offering services such as blood pressure and glucose screenings; referrals for high-risk individuals to nearby medical clinics; and enrollment into public health insurance. In collaboration with Volunteers Counseling Services of Rockland County, HASCO hosted weekly support groups that addressed topics such as coping with the aftermath of the earthquake; recognizing and managing post-traumatic stress disorder; and adjusting to life in America. Each weekly support group averaged approximately 25 participants.
- Coordinated with Hudson River HealthCare, which had opened a new clinic in Spring Valley, to have a case manager from the clinic come to HACSO every Friday to host one-on-one health counseling and education sessions on specific topics such as breast cancer and HIV/AIDS awareness.
- Promoted its services and other mental health services in the community by holding nine presentations, hosted by the United Way of Rockland County, at the local county Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and by attending five community outreach health fairs.
- Raised awareness about mental health—a topic that is not typically discussed in Haitian culture and often considered taboo—and the availability of existing mental health services in the community.
- Established a health and mental health stakeholder coalition group to raise awareness of and need for mental health services in the community. This coalition consisted of community leaders, nonprofit

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<sup>3</sup>These children were either American citizens who were in Haiti at the time of the earthquake or new immigrants with legal status (i.e., temporary protected status or other visa designation).

organizations, and faith-based organizations. During the grant period, the coalition met monthly to discuss current and new needs within the Haitian community, coordinate services among the organizations, and strategize on how to raise awareness of health and mental health in the community.

## Future

Because of the one-time, responsive nature of these projects, NYSHealth did not continue to provide funding to the two funding collaboratives and HACSO beyond their grant periods. However, some individual projects supported within each funding collaborative have continued their work. For example, North Shore Child and Family Guidance Center received additional funding totaling \$19,000 to continue its grant activities.

Important lessons emerged from all three NYSHealth grants, especially those related to working with new partners and meeting community needs after a disaster event. For example:

- Creating a sense of community is a key part of recovery. The two funding collaboratives' grant recipients and HACSO focused on broadening their reach—sometimes beyond providing mental health and health services—and raising awareness of their services to allow residents to talk in their own language, share their stories with staff members who were of the same culture and language, and adjust to a new life in the United States. Because mental health is not widely discussed in Haitian culture, it was important to organize gatherings and community events where people can talk to each other as a way of sharing and receiving support from their peers and from community-based organizations.
- It is critical to coordinate and build partnerships with other community-based organizations that have different expertise or provide different services. For example, North Shore Child and Family Guidance Center, whose expertise is working with children, partnered with St. Bridget Parish, All Saints Community Church, and Westbury Rotary Club to refer students and their families for immediate help with food, clothing, and shelter needs. HACSO also took the opportunity to formalize a partnership with a new community health center, Hudson River HealthCare, which resulted in increased access to health services for the population that HACSO served. However, universities and hospitals could have played an important role in supporting these communities and initiatives and should have been formally included in the beginning.
- The number of individuals and families helped by the three NYSHealth grants and their subrecipients



was relatively small compared with the actual number of Haitian residents or recent immigrants in the three regions. However, that seemed to be the general trend as other Haitian communities around the country experienced a smaller number of incoming immigrants than expected. Furthermore, the recipients of the funding collaboratives and HACSO were small community-based organizations that already had strained resources. The additional number of individuals and families seeking assistance further exacerbated the burden faced by these already understaffed and underfunded organizations.

- New partnerships and ventures were formed among the various foundations. This was the first time that NYSHealth formally worked with BCF and LICF. In researching potential response strategies, it became apparent that the community foundations in each region had a deep understanding regarding the needs of Haitian communities, the types of services needed, and who the community stakeholders were. While NYSHealth played an active role in managing its investments, the Foundation relied heavily on the community foundations' knowledge for selecting grant recipients. In addition, the funding collaboratives allowed organizations to target resources to or work with a specific community for the first time. For example, BCF developed two new initiatives as a result of partnerships formed during the process. The New York Haitian Leadership Fellowship, a partnership between CAUSE-NY and BCF, is a six-month professional leadership development training program for nonprofit directors serving the Haitian community in New York City. The second new initiative was the formation of the Coalition of Haitian Service Providers, a new advocacy and programming organization. BCF and an outside consultant, Community Resource Exchange, continued to play a key role in solidifying this organization's mission and its advocacy and programming strategies.
- Sustainability of the outreach and program services developed by small nonprofit organizations under the funding collaboratives and by HACSO was a key concern after the funding ended. However, the services provided—including immigration assistance, ESL classes, case management services, housing, and other social needs—still remain within the community in the years after the Haiti earthquake.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

### ABOUT THE GRANTEE

Brooklyn Community Foundation (BCF), established in 1998 by Independence Community Bank, is dedicated to improving the lives and communities in Brooklyn through local giving, grantmaking, and community service. BCF has five grantmaking programs—arts for all, caring neighbors, community development, green communities, and education and youth—all of which are dedicated to working with donors, nonprofit groups, and civic leaders in Brooklyn.

### GRANTEE CONTACT

Toya Williford  
Program Director  
Brooklyn Community Foundation  
45 Main Street, Suite 409  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Phone: (718) 722-2300  
E-mail: [twilliford@brooklyncommunityfoundation.org](mailto:twilliford@brooklyncommunityfoundation.org)  
Website: <http://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org>

### NYSHEALTH CONTACT

David Sandman

### GRANT ID #

3923259



## BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

### ABOUT THE GRANTEE

Established by The New York Community Trust in 1978, Long Island Community Foundation (LICF) is a nonprofit, charitable organization that connects donors to the full spectrum of charitable organizations in Nassau and Suffolk counties. LICF provides funding in nine different program areas—arts, community development, education, environment, health, mental health, hunger, technical assistance, and youth violence prevention—and also manages the Long Island Unitarian Universalist Fund, from which periodic grants are made.

### GRANTEE CONTACT

Sol Marie Alfonso-Jones  
Program Officer  
Long Island Community Foundation  
1864 Muttontown Road  
Syosset, NY 11791

Phone: (516) 348-0575 ext. 232

E-mail: [sjones@licf.org](mailto:sjones@licf.org)

Website: <http://www.licf.org/>

### NYSHEALTH CONTACT

David Sandman

### GRANT ID #

10-01649

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

### ABOUT THE GRANTEE

Haitian American Cultural and Service Organization (HACSO) is a nonprofit, grassroots community organization established in 1974 to serve Haitian immigrants in Rockland County. HACSO, along with other community-based organizations and government agencies in the region, provides a full range of social services, including immigration assistance, health, housing, and HIV/AIDS outreach and education. HACSO's goal is to empower and provide immigrants with the tools needed to build self-sufficiency and reduce language and cultural barriers that challenge their access to existing community resources and programs.

### GRANTEE CONTACT

Rose Leandre  
Executive Director  
Haitian American Cultural and Social Organization  
P.O. BOX 477  
Spring Valley, NY 10977-0477

Phone: (845) 352-5897  
E-mail: [ralgraf1@aol.com](mailto:ralgraf1@aol.com)  
Website: <http://www.hacsocommunitycenter.org/>

### NYSHEALTH CONTACT

David Sandman

### GRANT ID #

0-01998